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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4602

February 2, 2021

Chair Jared Huffman
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Huffman,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great uncertainty and significant loss of revenue for the aquaculture and seafood industries. The Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee's May 2020 roundtable on Coronavirus Impacts to American Fisheries and the Seafood Supply was informative in revealing how the pandemic has affected seafood and fishery businesses and how to mitigate those impacts. I urge you to hold a hearing this Congress to discuss whether federal aid provided to fishery participants was impactful and to invite a witness from the Virginia aquaculture and shellfish industry.

Shellfish growers make up more than 80% of Virginia's aquaculture sector and face unique barriers since most of their products are sold in restaurants rather than grocery stores. As a result, shellfish growers have faced and will continue to experience exceptionally high losses. The CARES Act provided \$300 million total in fisheries disaster assistance, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) allocated \$4.5 million for Virginia. This allocation fell far short of the relief needed to keep many in the aquaculture and shellfish industry solvent.

I am grateful the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act included an additional \$300 million to assist fishery participants. However, NOAA has yet to announce funding allocations for states, and I fear they will implement the same strategy and fail to adequately support the industry in the Commonwealth. It would be prudent for Congress to investigate whether aid designated for fishery participants achieved Congressional intent and, if not, how to improve future allocations of relief funds.

Holding a hearing with a witness from the Virginia aquaculture and shellfish sector should provide the Subcommittee insight on this issue. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress